

THE
BECKONING SKYLINE
AND OTHER POEMS

By James Lewis Milligan

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THE BECKONING SKYLINE
AND OTHER POEMS

The Beckoning Skyline and Other Poems

By

James Lewis Milligan

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TO
MY MARGARET

163838

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*I*N each land the sun doth visit,
We are blest whate'er betide:
To give space for wandering is it
That the world was made so wide.
—Wilhelm Meister.

THE BECKONING SKYLINE

(A Lyric Sequence)

THE BECKONING SKYLINE

PART ONE

I.

O *THE ships! the enchanted ships!*
Riggings in a white west sky!
O the sailors on the slips,
Tears of greeting and good bye!

Port again! to sea again!
So the sailors pass their years;
Every joy is half a pain,
All their kisses brined with tears!

Where the Atlantic's rhythmic breast
Pulses in the Mersey's tide,
Ocean traffickers have rest,
Moored the busy wharves beside;

Rupert lived, a bard obscure,
Garnering his dreams by stealth;
Proud of soul, though he was poor,
Hearth and Home his cherished wealth.

Not of those who till the soil,
But he laboured, hand and brain,
Knew the healthy ache of toil,
Envied none his greed of gain.

II.

Rich was he in lofty moods,
Priest of sunsets and of dawns,
Lord of leafy solitudes,
Ravisher of jewelled lawns!

Roamer of the windy hills,
Where he hailed in ecstasy
Valleys laced with silver rills,
Rivers that obey the sea!

Sorrow sat upon his brow,
But he nursed a boundless hope;
Past and future merged to Now
In his mind's kaleidoscope.

Impatient with the doubts that rise,
In the black face of Death he flung
Melodious lyric ecstasies
From the depth of sorrow wrung.

III.

Friends he had, a chosen few;
Oft beside the glowing coal
He would talk of deeds to do,
Mighty Iliads of the soul!

Through the region of the mind
Strangest visions he would see—
Remnants of some life behind,
Inklings of futurity.

Yet he loved his Motherland,
Spite of all her chastenings;—
Never would he leave her strand
Till his spirit found its wings!

IV.

By the sea at set of sun
Rupert strayed in dreams alone;
Watched the laden ships that run
Out into the blue unknown:

From the shimmering sea-girt west
Came an urgent voice and wild,
Calling to a far-off quest:
Rupert hearkened like a child.

At this siren seaward call
Every homely thing grew strange:
Must I go and leave them all
For the hearthless life of change?

*No! Shall time be rent in twain?
One country is enough for me,
One life, one vision to attain—
There shall now be no more sea!*

v.

Home he went with face aglow,
Drew his wife before the fire;
Told her he would never go—
England held his one desire.

Lost in love, with eyes agaze,
Long they sat in silent bliss;
Building dreams amid the blaze,
Sealing memories with a kiss.

In the night with dread he woke,
Dreaming he had gone away;
But when silver morning broke,
Laughingly he hailed the day!

When his golden baby girl
Touched him with her velvet hand,
Even the tangle of a curl
Bound him to his native land.

*Such sweetness is in mortal things,
Such happiness in fleeting hours,
All angel Hopes are born with wings,
And fastest fade our fairest flowers.*

VI.

Thus Rupert loved his home the more,
Since he had found it was so frail;
Things he had never prized before
Were precious as the Holy Grail.

Yet, ever when the sky was gold,
With sunset glory in the west,
He dreamed of travel tales untold,
His bosom yearned with wander-zest.

There, where the flaming sun had gone,
He saw the prairies clad with grain;
A mighty task that must be done—
Beyond the main! beyond the main!

Nor did the new desire grow dim
When the last shaft of day was flown;
Night laid a deeper hold on him,
And whispered of a high unknown.

The stars above the sombrous sea,
The lights along the shadowy shore,
Glowed with a double mystery
Which dared him to its depths explore.

VII.

There was a fate in all he did,
A wilfulness without a will;
He followed where the spirit bid,
Without a sense of good or ill.

He sold the home he loved so well,
And bargained lightly for the pelf;
But Judas knew no deeper hell
When he went out and hanged himself,
Than Rupert when the deed was done;
Seeing the lovely thing he'd slain,
There in the murdered house alone
He wept, and wept, and wept again!

*O tears! from what deep source arise
Those floods that burst the dams within,
That rush like freshets from the eyes,
Washing away remorse and sin?*

VIII.

When Rupert's storm of grief was past
He lay in sunlight, like a boy
Who watches the white clouds sail fast,
His soul a driven cloud of joy.

His fancy ranging winged and free
Poised the orb'd planet on its pole;
Vast continents and vaster Sea
Were but the mirror of his soul.

*Why loiter here, my soul? Put out once more!
Wide stretch the seas, and many a fairer shore
Awaits thy coming! Dost thou fear the main
That brought thee hither? Put you forth again
O purpose-laden soul! For many an isle
Shall rise beyond the purple rim and smile
A welcome to thee, where thy loves of old
Shall live again, and like a tale new told
All that was fair in the forgotten years
For ever shall be thine, without the tears.
O wide blue Ocean of Eternity,
In thy large care I leave my destiny!*

PART TWO

I.

O the ships! the enchanted ships!
Comrades of the sea and sky!
O what world-enclasping trips
Sailors knew in days gone by!

All the tales of childhood years,
Tales of treasure-lured emprise,
Rang again in Rupert's ears,
Pictured in his sea-blue eyes,

As he gripped the last loved hand,
Kissed the trembling lips of Home,
Stepped from off his native strand
To the rider of the foam.

Along the gangway poured a stream
Of aching hearts and puzzled brains—
What if it were all a dream?—
"Clear the plank! let go the chains!"

II.

A group of drunken stokers stood
In ribald parley by a door;
One fellow's face was streaked with blood,
One lay out-stretched upon the floor.

The two had fought, as all men fight
For Caesarship on sea and land;
The others argued who was right—
But one had got the upper-hand.

III.

A woman holding tight her child
 Sat on a luggage-heap forlorn;
 Her eyes, deep-drained of tears, were wild,
 Her face was speechless, pale and worn.

Her husband sailed a year before,
 And she was leaving all behind
 To join him on a fabled shore,
 Where Fortune, so they said, was kind:

Ah! cruel kindness that could tear
 The heart up by the roots for gold!
 Can all Columbia's wealth compare
 With Albion's love-charmed scenes of old?

*Waving adieu! adieu!
 Over the widening sea;
 Watching the faithful few
 Wafting farewells to me.*

*Blind with mist in the eye,
 Friends to the sight have died—
 Flinging the last good-bye
 Over the blue, blue tide.*

*Out to the west we sail,
 Riding the rearing wave,
 Hail, Canada! hail!
 England is in her grave.*

IV.

With the salt breezes on his brow
 His buoyant thoughts sped on before,
 With Hope upon the vessel's prow
 He clove the inviolate ocean floor.

He looked beyond the western rim,
To picture that remote *perhaps*,
And build a homeland on the dim
And vague suggestion of the maps.

But when the steamer through the night
Dragged like a chain its moonlit wake,
Then memory took the backward flight
And hope grew pale for England's sake.

'Twas then the vivid hours begot
A vision of the ocean's girth,
And England as a little dot
Upon the globe of all the earth.

No more the immemorial hills,
The homing road, the sheltering woods,
No more the din of faction's ills
Shut out the sense of latitudes.

He marvelled that himself was blind
And deaf to all the world's alarms,
Like the vague sheep that browse behind
Those cliffs that face a world in arms.

v.

*Silent all the ship at midnight,
Save for foolish talk in sleep,
And the ceaseless muffled throbbing
Of the liner's bosom deep.*

*High o'erhead the starry meadows
Flourish in immortal bloom;
Fathoms down the crystal regions,
Wonder-haunted caves of gloom.*

*On this bubble of a planet,
Poised amid the double dome,
Worlds above, around, beneath us—
Where is now our English home?*

*Where'er thou art is home,
Whether on land or sea,
'Neath blue or starry dome—
'Tis always home with thee!*

*The migrant birds of May
Build but a season's nest;
With thee on time's highway
Perennially I'm blest.*

*'Mid gloomy tents of care,
When thy sweet face has come—
Lo! round me, unaware,
Arise the Courts of Home!*

VI.

Alone with circling sun and star,
The ship steamed westward to a land
As phantom as the clouds afar,
Like mountains on a baseless strand.

Calm was the highway of the sea,
The voyage was a pleasure trip!
The cabins rang with revelry;
There never was a merrier ship!

The flannelled folk of the saloon
Lounged in their easy hammock-chairs;
Galicians droned an eerie tune
In dirty dens below the stairs.

While Rupert, standing 'tween the decks,
Thought, as he watched some drifting wood,
"What are we all, but bits of wrecks,
Life's flotsam on time's wandering flood?"

VII.

*Like drift-wood on the tide,
This harried soul of mine,
Buffeted on the waters wide,
Without a goal, without a guide
That I can e'er divine.*

*Now on the billows vast,
Akin with sun and star;
Now down into the hollows cast—
Up on the crest of hope at last
I cross the harbor bar!*

*There shall I rest awhile
Among the straining hulls,
Where busy lands-men's songs beguile
And azure hours of quiet smile
Amid the wheeling gulls;*

*On to the golden strand
Where city children play,
Building their little dreams in sand,
I touch the shores of Fairyland
Where all is holiday!*

*Until the tide comes back
And bears me out again,
Against the rocks with ruthless wrack
I'm driven 'neath the heavens black,
On a wild and starless main.*

VIII.

Lo! on the south horizon black,
The white squall leaped in roaring play;
And swift, with deafening thunder-wrack,
The ship was gulfed in seas of spray!
Through darkness split with forks of flame,
Through howling blasts the liner sped;
Old Chaos back to Cosmos came,
And struck Time's emigrants with dread.
But Rupert, with an awed delight,
Rejoiced amid the weltering war:
A mighty symbol was the sight,
His soul's triumphant Trafalgar!
All storms are local, the sheer world
Rides full-rigged on the ether sea;
These clouds are sun-smit sails unfurled—
A Galleon of Eternity!
Launched into space this Solar Fleet,
Freighted with human merchandise,
Sweeps the blue Infinite complete,
Bound for the shores of Paradise!

IX.

Now there blew an icy breeze,
As from off an Arctic strand;
Gazing o'er the misty seas
Rupert thought he sighted land.
Was it land, or was it cloud,
That dim shape which glanced and gleamed,
White and ghostly as a shroud?
Now it like an island seemed—

A frigid, baseless, drifting isle,
No home for man or beast or tree;
Cold purity without a smile,
Fair derelict of the northern sea.

The berg!
Thou silent menace of the deep,
Sleeping in cold majesty,
Ghostly, impalpable as a vision;
Yet, so real that whoso' heeds not,
Whoso' smites this spectre
Hits Eternity!
What art thou?
Air in being,
Ethereal Prometheus
Bound in polar chains;
A frigid, baseless isle,
No home for anything—
Drifting there in sleep,
Southward ever vanishing,
Dying into life!
Hoary with age millennial,
Yet thou art
The womb of airy cloudlets,
Mountain streams,
Foam of falls,
Mother of driving hail,
And the cool crystal drops
That bless the lips of pain.

X.

Through the night the drear fog-horn
Bellowed o'er the waters blind:
Never was a morrow morn
Welcomed by a crew so kind!

Someone rumored "Land ahead!"
Rupert rose and keenly scanned
The horizon, where they said
Lay the shores of Newfoundland.

'Twas to him a new-found-world,
The same that bold Columbus thrilled,
When the sea's blue scroll unfurl'd,
And he saw his dreams fulfilled.

Afar the hills of Labrador!
Wild half-sister to the Pole;
Home of Odin and of Thor,
Tyrants of the Teuton's soul.

O the first glad glimpse of green!
O the skiffs on the lagoon!
O the little towns serene!
Up the Lawrence tide at noon!

Like a miniature Tyre,
Dawned each harbor on the view;
Lighthouse, cottage, tree and spire—
That's a bit of England too!

XI.

In the tenuous evening light
Rupert paced the forward deck,
Venus flamed in the western height
Like a goddess o'er Quebec!

Gaunt and dark the city stood,
Gemmed with lamps against the sky;
Hope's wild rapture thrilled his blood
As he hailed that star on high!

*Fixed and fair where'er we rove,
'Mid the evening and the morn,
Hangs the constant star of Love,
Under which our souls were born;*

*On! we follow, on for aye!
Pilot of our endless quest,
'Neath thy morn and evening sway
We shall find both toil and rest.*

When from the gates of Eden went
Our primal parents toward the wild,
One star burned in the firmament—
Venus, unfallen, undefiled:

And still above the wastes of day,
Though men and cities all grow old,
Love's star assumes her ancient sway
O'er Memory's far, still strand of gold.

POEMS WRITTEN
IN ENGLAND
AND CANADA

"O BARDS TRIUMPHANT!"

O BARDS triumphant! whose intrepid songs
Linger within our hearts and echo still
Among our hills and valleys, woods and streams,
And haunt the lonely margins of the sea—
High Sons of Song! ah, never, never more
Will ye upon your strong, melodious wings
Uplift our souls above the thrall of time,
Shed halcyon glory on our common lot
And lead us wondering through the realms of gold!
Have pity on us in Elysium,
Exalted shades, and visit us again:
Here where we sojourn for a little while
To learn the lessons of mortality
And school our souls to sorrow; all in vain
My nervous fingers fumble with the strings—
O for that touch divine, that sure, clear voice
Authentic, that sheer empyreal flight
That fetches the Promethean fire, and shakes
The lethal stupor from the souls of men!

ALL THINGS RETURN

I LOVE these green ways, where in wonderment
I wander'd as upon a new-found star!
Oft, ere mankind was stirring, have I sped
Like a young deer across these fields at morn,
Scattering the pearls of dew with wanton feet,
Leaping these narrow dykes for very joy!
Now stooping o'er a limpid pool to watch
The timid fish sail through their crystal world.
Much have I learned since then of men and things:
Ah! shall I sing of city sorrows when
The Spring is tingling in my veins and I
Am on the Mount of Vision? Let that pass,
All sordid travail is but for an hour,
None suffers all in vain who dares endure
In patience with a steadfast eastward gaze!
I know there's life and beauty wheresoe'er
There's soil and season to receive it; Joy
Awaits our winter's passing: break the clod,
Fling wide the store of grain, bide and believe!

O all the Springs and Summers yet to be!
And all the songs that Poets yet unborn
Shall sing, surge on my soul, till I could wish
Myself a harp Æolian, so I might
Amaze men's ears with spherul melody!
O could I chaunt the rapture that my heart
Feels as I wander through these verdant ways!
It seems I have been blind for many years;
Or I have slept and had a heavy dream!
Ah! when they bury me I shall arise
With every spring, and my unfetter'd soul
Will enter into butterflies and bees
And lie encouch'd within a wild-flower's bell!
For I am not akin with care and moil.
This feverish pursuit and dread, and all
The vanities of cities are not life!

Tue Brook, Liverpool.

"TE DEUM"

IT is the Sabbath Day, toil's grateful truce.
The sun has nigh attained his topmost tower,
And all the vernal countryside is rapt
In peaceful reverie: the birds are mute
And sit a-dreaming by their drowsy broods;
Unbroken is the azure dome of heaven,
Save where white clouds, like Bedouin tents afar,
About the world's rotundity repose.
'Tis scarce an hour from noon; the village bells
Have ceased. Hark! how the singing of the rural
choir
Floats to the ear like airs from Paradise!
I listen at the windows ivied o'er:
They're singing the "Te Deum." Ah! those boys
With their seraphic voices: All the earth
Doth worship Thee, the Father Everlasting!

Mine eyes hold secret converse with mine ears:
Yon ruin is the elegy of man;
His work, even as he, comes to decay.
But this High Song, whose rapture thrills my soul,
Is still as sweet and new as when I first
Heard it, far off in those idyllic days,
When through the vales of Arcady I roved,
And bathed my vision in the flood of dawn;
Inhaled the air of hills and seas, and bared
My brow and bosom to the freshening winds!
This only is immortal. When the soul
Forsakes the halls of Song, and makes its home
Amid the getting, grasping marts of men,
Spending on glow-worms what will purchase stars—
Time has begun, and Death's slow, sure disease.

But whoso holds entire his capital
Against a battering and insidious world,
And from his being's centre, unbedimmed,
Looks out on Time with far-discerning eyes,
Holding but lightly to material things,
Happy to stay, yet eager to be gone—
He is the Poet, though he never writ
A line of metre; he is God's Free-man
And has the franchise of Eternity!
Into his soul through every sense there steal
Immortal melodies. This song of praise,
This verdant life, this fragrance, the blue sky,
Those mighty mountains and the distant sea,
Are symbols of the everlasting song
Swelling from age to age among the Stars!

Wallesey Church Yard, Cleshire.

SPRING AMONG THE RUINS

I'VE tuned my heart to Thirty Springs
And sighed o'er Thirty Summers flown;
I've watch'd the rise and fall of things
And stood amid the wrack alone.

And I have learned that Time and Change
Are Nature's law, and that Decay
And Death are not so very strange,
But follow as the Night the Day.

How many times I've paused beside
This Mansion old and desolate,
Musing upon its Builder's pride,
Reading its parable of Fate.

How oft I've yearn'd to set in rhyme
The sad, mute rapture of that mood
Which holds me spell-like every time
I pause amid this Solitude!

He came in that glad year of yore,
(I knew him, though I was not born),
He brought his Bride unto that door—
How fair and fragrant was the Morn!

I saw her like a Seraph white
Steal o'er the lawn with airy tread,
And stoop to pluck the lilies light
And kiss the roses white and red.

I watch'd Her at the even's close
Sit sewing at the window there;
Till He, on stealthy, silent toes,
Would come and kiss Her unaware!

On many a night before the fire
They sat and talk'd on home affairs;
Or sang a ballad to the lyre
To ease the heart of little cares!

They greeted oft within that Hall
Their closer friends with hearty jest;
And many a story true and "tall"
Was spun by sleepy Host and Guest!

I saw. . . . But let the record cease
The Sequel is too sad a theme:
By yonder Church they lie in peace
They sleep and fancy 'twas a dream.

Again the Earth her Youth renews,
Over is Winter's wind and rain:
But Ruin still Man's work pursues,
Nor comes He to his haunts again.

West Derby, Liverpool.

ETERNITY

SHE comes to me in nightly dreams
And round my neck her arm she slips,
Her eyes have soul-entrancing beams,
Celestial honey are her lips.

She whispers secrets deep and strange,
Of things beyond my mental scan;
She never speaks of Time or change,
Nor mentions the affairs of man.

Ah, Fair One, whom these eyes of clay
Have never seen and ne'er shall see;
Thou art too sacred for the day;
Bride of my soul—Eternity!

THE DALES OF ARCADY

'MID the blue immortal hills
Lie the Dales of Arcady;
Pastures green and lucent rills,
Leafy groves of Melody!

There are maids with gleeful faces,
Eyes that match the skies above them,
Loitering in flowery places
Yet with ne'er a youth to love them.

Love is the forbidden fruit
In this primal paradise:
Love of sorrow is the root—
Touch it not if ye are wise:

Whoso loves at once must flee
The sunny Dales of Arcady!

TO A LADY

SWEET, sainted lady, did you know
A child bestowed his heart on you
As he beheld you in your pew—
Those sabbath mornings long ago?
That face with heaven's light aglow,
Those kindly eyes of hazel hue,
That voice which sang the service through
And thrill'd me with the sweetest woe!

You did not know; so pure a love
To tell were base profanity:
Haply you felt your spirit move
To loftier heights of ecstasy,
Like mine as your fair form appears
Far down the misty aisle of years!

FALLEN LEAVES

LOW lies the summer's glory sere and dead—
These fallen leaves—and ah! they were so green!
Alas! that we should on such beauty tread,
That loveliness should have an end so mean!

Long dreary days and nights, with artist care,
Did Nature sit her garment fashioning;
Then deftly wove her bridal raiment fair
Upon the secret, silent looms of Spring.

And now she casts the wondrous thing away,
And all her labor mingles with the earth;
Forgot the vernal pride of yesterday
Forward she looks unto another birth.

So, do I look beyond our winter woe—
Ah! Love, believe it and it shall be so!

TO W. L.

(1876-1910)

THEY lied to me who told me thou had'st died,
That I should ne'er again thy face behold:
Thou art this very moment at my side,
As kindly and as thoughtful as of old.
Though they displayed thy vacant, wonted space,
And told me all the story of thy end,
Though they did point to thy last resting place,
'Twas not of thee they spoke—not thee, my friend!

THE LEAF DANCE

WHO comes behind me with so light a step
And rustling silken skirts?—'Tis but the leaves;
I thought they all were dead! Did I not mourn
Over their graves last year! and now they come
Dancing in sunlight, chasing clouds along,
Or flying like small birds of russet hue!
Ev'n so about me dance the days and dreams
Of summers dead; and, like these happy leaves,
The spirits of departed loveliness,
They come not sadly, though in brown attire;
They dance before me in the wind of thought,
Now waltzing in a circle, clustering
Together, and like lovers whispering
Of things that only leaves and lovers know.

AFTER GLOW

(TO REV. S. A. TIPPLE)

HIS sunset was a realm of burnished gold,
With a long afterglow of genial fire,
Full of dear dreaming on the days of old,
Fraught with new visions and a vast desire.

Alone upon the saffron verge of day,
Night's star-flecked azure closing him around,
Undoubting at old Charon's long delay,
Serene he scanned the infinite profound.

Night has not gulfed him in enduring dark—
Is that place dark where glows a million suns?
Our solar orb is but a dying spark
To those through which his homing spirit runs.

Brief day is ours, for him imperial night
Is one domain of everlasting light.

CALYPSO

I HAVE worshipped, I have worshipped,
At one fair and hallow'd shrine,
Sacrificed on one pure altar,
Drunk from one clear glass the wine;
Hast thou higher bliss to offer—
Is there sweeter juice in thine?
Thou art fair to outward seeming,
All hast thou the eye requires;
But within awaits the stirring
Hinnom's everlasting fires;
And thy cup so red and luring
Holds a draught of mad desires.

UNDER THE BILLOWS

UNDER the heaving billows
Full fifty fathoms deep,
They lie on their rocking pillows
All wrapped in dreamy sleep.

Of what do they dream, those seamen
Who foundered in years of yore?
They dream they are home and freemen,
And will sail the seas no more!

They lie in bliss unweeting,
Nor know that their hearths are cold,
That there's none to give them greeting
Could they come to their haunts of old.

Under the heaving billows,
Full fifty fathoms deep,
They lie on their rocking pillows
All wrapped in dreamy sleep.

TRANSITION

LOOK not so kindly, pretty maiden,
Your eyes like arrows pierce my breast ;
Your heart with virgin love is laden,
But sorrow is my bosom's guest.

Fair dawns the world upon your vision,
Your path is strewn with roses rare ;
I tread the valley of transition,
Sad musing on the hours that were.

The golden hours of love are over,
And noon dispels the dreams of morn ;
I am too sad to make a lover,
My heart for life has too much scorn.

Sweet maid, fare forward to your meeting,
Your errant knight is on his way ;
What bliss awaits that lovers greeting !
My hope is in the end of day.

THE GATES OF MORN

FAIR morns that have been in the silent years,
Glad days and long with friends who've gone
away,

Lone love-lock'd castles moated round with tears,
Rise up before me with this rising day.

Sweet sun that through my humble lattice smiles,
Whose golden magic makes the world anew;
Shall I yield up my sadness to your wiles,
Let go the past and take the opening view?

Yea, and farewell, ye dear seductive woes!
This soul knows nought of doubting or despair:
Lead on, bright vision, till the last day close;
The past was well—the future shall be fair!

O God, thou Wonder-Worker! what high dreams
Hast thou safe garner'd in the vast To Be!
Thou keepest well the secret of thy schemes;
I guess the meaning of mortality.

Fling open wide, ye golden gates of morn!
New friends, new hopes shall crown this virgin day:
All the dead days are with this day new born;
Death now is dead—the shadows flee away!

Liverpool.

THE STAR

ONCE in my youth I saw the Star of Morn
Gleam like an angel raimented in light,
Beckoning me o'er ethereal deeps serene,
Thrilling my soul with yearnings and high dreams,—
Such dreams this old world never can fulfil:
Yet I have kept that peerless planet's beam,
That fair celestial herald of the Morn,
Fixed in the Eastern firmament, whereto
I sail, e'en as a seaman at the helm
Measures his course by some mast-crowning star.

WAYFARERS

HAVE your hands laboured, has your brow glistened,

Crowned with the gems at the anvil distilled?

Give me that hand, for I too, my brother,

Smote the white iron and made the sparks fly;

Forged a keen sword to face an ill fate with,

Fashion'd a shield 'gainst the inroads of Death.

Out of my workshop I went lone and scrippless,

Took to the highway, the sun and the stars;

Gazed upon mountains and seas discontented,

Mingled with myriads of men in great cities,

Looked in the infinite eyes of a friend;

Loved one fair daughter of Eve, and in that one

Found all and more than Solomon found;

Clasped to my bosom angels I fain would

Hold there for ever—but, ah, they had wings!

Come, let us brazen our fronts to the blast, then!

Precious this burden of life that we bear,

Priceless this jewel, unsullied we found it—

Shall it be dimmed at the end of the age?

Not of the dust or the air is our being,

Wrapped though we be in the cloud and the clod,

Blind are our eyes with the mists on the slopes here,

On to the Heights! to the vision of God!

THE EMIGRANT

MY heart is stricken with many memories
While listless through these busy streets I roam ;
Long leagues of land and wide unfriendly seas
Sever me from my country and my home.

No face, no voice, no hand of all this throng
Greets me, full knowing those receding years ;
My loose lips tremble to an exile's song,
And overflow my eyes with childish tears.

O restless Time, ah, whither wilt thou bear
My yearning spirit? O sweet Mother Earth,
Hast thou no place of habitation where
My soul may dwell and feel no sense of dearth?

The sun is lord of all below, above :
Men, maids and children seize the joyous day ;
I see in them retold my tale of Love,
And as I look they, too, fly swift away.

“UNTO THE HILLS”

I STAND on the top of the ages,
On the crest of the wave of time;
I grasp the thoughts of the sages,
I read the God-writ rhyme.

I muse 'mid the ancient mountains,
Untrammell'd by men and alone;
I list to the lilt of the fountains,
I scan the pages of stone.

Afar is the smoke of the village,
Where men pass their lives in vain;
Who, after a few years of tillage,
Return to the earth again.

I know all the zest of the city,
The pageant of empire I know:
And for all I have nothing but pity—
There is nought worth the toil and the woe.

I am one with the sorrowful preacher—
“There is nothing new under the sun;”
And the earnest hope of the creature
Is that soon the strife will be done.

And yet mine eyes to the mountains
Turn ever with yearning and tears;
And within me, as fresh as the fountains,
Springs hope in the flight of the years!

Actinolite, Ont.

ONTARIO

THE Hemlock and the Cedar,
The Spruce and monarch Pine,
Waved o'er the tents of Kedar
Where now the harvests shine.

But who can tell the story
Of all the toil and stress
Which wrought a land of glory
From out the wilderness?

From Highland cot and Lowland
They wrestled o'er the seas,
They left their homes for No-land—
A land of lakes and trees.

From dawn to dusk they wrought it,
They smote it left and right;
With blood and sweat they bought it—
Then passed into the night.

Their hands were rough and horny
That ours might gentler be;
The path was steep and thorny
That gained our liberty.

The Hemlock and the Cedar,
The Spruce and monarch Pine,
Waved o'er the tents of Kedar
Where now the harvests shine.

Actinolite, Ont.

CANADIAN SLEIGH SONG

THE setting sun, like an artist bold,
Paints the snow on the billowy wold,
The shadows are blue and the lights are red,
Deeper they grow as he sinks his head;
Afar, where the pine-clad hills arise,
'Tis purple against the saffron skies;
While I step in my sleigh
And drive away
Fifteen miles at the end of day.

'Tis cold! They say it is ten below,
'Twill be twenty-five in an hour or so;
I cover my ears and muffle my chin,
And tuck my feet all cosily in;
I speak to my horse, as drivers do,
And she seems to understand me, too,
We're off, I tell her, to "Fourth Line,"
She cocks her ears as a knowing sign,
While her hoofs beat time
To the sleigh bells' chime,
And my heart indites this swinging rhyme.

The fires of day burn low and red,
The stars are bright'ning overhead;
I ride alone on the top of the world,
The woods and streams in sleep are furl'd;
O'er hill and dale, through rocky glade,
I glide like a ghost—a wand'ring shade—
What more am I? as I came I go,
I glide through life as over the snow;
The shapes fly past ere they're half-discern'd,
The years slip by and to dreams are turned,
And nought remains but these stars that rise
Like a wall of gems before my eyes—
A bright enigma, a dream too high,
Which lures me upward, I know not why,
 As I sit in my sleigh
 And drive away,
Ever on till the dawn of day!

Actinolite, Ont.

THE FRESHET

I HEAR the little freshet's song
As merrily it flows along
The village lanes at spring.
I know 'tis made by melting snows,
The passing of my winter woes,
And singing to the sea it goes—
I love to hear it sing!

'Tis blither than the robin's note,
No bird has half so sweet a throat;
No bird or singing-man
Could chant a song so pure and gay,
The angels have no sweeter lay
Than this that cheers the world to-day—
It is the pipe of Pan!

I listen to the river's voice,
And watch it in its strength rejoice,
Tumultuously free!
"Ho! clear the way!" the waters cry,
"We've journey'd through the spacious sky,
Too long we've linger'd high and dry—
Home! brothers, to the sea!"

Actinolite, Ont.

THE OLD SHANTYMAN

I HAVE a restless feeling in my old bones day by day;

It comes at early morning with a yearning sharp as pain;

It haunts me at the noontide and when daylight dies away—

A longing for the shanty and the merry boys again.

I was born amid the woodlands; ever since I was a boy

I roved the forest regions, and I loved each sight and sound;

I have wielded axe and cross-cut, and I know no greater joy

Than to see the giant pine-tree brought in thunder to the ground.

At times when I lie wakeful in the night upon my bed

I can see the boys a-playing cards around the yellow lamp;

And the silly songs they're singing go ringing through my head,

And when they pause I hear the wolves outside the lumber camp.

Aye, there is a zest in living with the frost at ten below,

When the thews are lithe and limber and the blood flows warm and free!

With the bearded boys about you skidding logs across the snow,

Where the slavery of labor is the lightest liberty.

What a joy to see the river break from winter with a shout!

When the freshets leap and wrestle in the sun's releasing beam!

When the happy birds come north again and leaves begin to sprout,

And the magic of the springtime rises round you like a dream.

O, to drive the logs and pilot them through many a winding vale,

Over headlong fall and rapid, rolling, bowling—
down they go!

Till we greet the open waters where the ocean vessels sail,

Where our inland dreams lie drifting, drifting,
drifting to and fro.

Actinolite, Ont.

THE AWAKENING

I WOKE at the dawning grey and still,
With a lingering dream in my head,
I heard the crows on the distant hill—
“Caw, caw, caw, caw,” they said.
And I greeted the day with a youth’s glad will,
For I knew that winter was dead.

I knew that his funeral knell was tolled,
That the sleek, black-suited crows
Had picked his bones on the windy wold,
Where he scatter’d his barren snows;
I heard the daffodil trumps of gold
Loud herald the Royal Rose!

I called to my Love, who long had lain
In dreams of our yester-year;
“Awake!” I said, “from thy visions vain,
The same old Spring is here!”
We walked through the woods and fields again,
And the birds sang gay and clear!

APRIL AGAIN

APRIL again! the magic month that opes
The gates of life and beauty for the world;
When leaf-buds burst and birds begin to build
The fragile tenements and tune their throats
For the full choral at the Feast of June.
Come out into the wakening world and see
The dead arise!

Faith is triumphant, and the skeptic Doubt
Slinks Pole-ward with his sterile crew, and lo!
From out the golden portals of the South
Spring comes with frolic laughter for our fears.

“Life! life! abundant life!” the Earth cries out:
See where the robin lifts his startled head
Amid his struggle with the grounded worm,
The nimble squirrel darts along the fence,
The vagrant crows are loitering on the wing,
The cows go lowing down the lane, the horse
Answers his fellow with a lusty shout!

Who could be old on such a youthful day?
Away with morbid musings on the past,
Sigh not for vanished opportunities;
Here once again life opens to you—go!
Set hand and heart to some good task, for Toil
Stands like an angel in these fallow ways,
Offering for healthful labor fields of gold.

THE FEATHERED HOSTS

HOSTS of feathered migrants winging
Northward through the azure regions,
Birds of every kind of singing—
Welcome! Welcome! happy legions!

Every little breast is burning
With the passion of a lover
Home to his betrothed returning,
When the weary wars are over.

Every little brain is dreaming
Of the mating and the nesting,
Of the sun-set's golden gleaming,
And the star-lit hours of resting;

Of the smooth eggs snugly lying
'Neath the patient brooding mother.
Of the baby-beaks a'crying—
All the fretful family bother!

Welcome! Welcome! merry wingers
From the southern summer regions;
Welcome all ye dauntless singers!
Welcome! glad celestial legions!

THE HIGHWAY

THERE'S nothing so free as the highway!
There's nothing so fair as the sky!
Come away from the wood and the by-way,
And take the big world in your eye!

Afar where the straight road rises,
Till lost on the crest of the hill,
There are vistas unscanned and surprises
For all who step out with a will.

A pageant of cloud is passing
In white-robed glory on high;
The pools in the meadows are glassing
The face of the laughing sky!

The fields lie furrowed or fallow,
The barn-doors are flung open wide,
The robin has come, and the swallow
Is journeying north with his bride.

Come fill your wide eyes with the beauty
Of furrow and farm and lea;
You owe to your soul this duty—
O come to the highway with me!

Hamilton, Ont.

THE CARELESS WIND

WHAT cares the Wind for you and me
Or the golden leaves on the maple tree?
For our summer dreams he has no care,
He blows our autumn branches bare.
The Wind is a wild, wild careless boy
Who thinks of nought but his own mad joy:
He lifts the seas into the skies
And laughs at the shipwrecked sailor's cries!
He sweeps o'er the hills and the peaceful dales
And comes to the town in furious gales,
He swoops thro' the streets with a whoop and shout,
And blows our houses inside out;
For King or peasant he cares not a rap—
The Wind is a very unmannerly chap!

WHEN FALL THE LEAVES

WHEN fall the leaves and birds are homeward
flying,

And chilling winds moan through the ruined woods,
When all the world is sorrowful and dying,

Our souls ascend to higher altitudes.

Pinioned with hope, the gates of Life assailing,

We soar where summers know no sad decay,
Where Love and Beauty, over Death prevailing,
In perfect union hold immortal sway.

How have we loved this Earth with all its beauty,

Here have we met some golden friends and true,
Here have we found a forward-urging duty,

Love has companioned us the journey through.

Love, love remains when all the leaves are faded,

Wooing us upward to the starry goal;
No vale of death, however deeply shaded,
Shall stay the triumph of the questing soul.

Hamilton, Ont.

OCTOBER

SAD and sober
Monk October
Comes in russet habit clad;
Sore relenting,
Loud repenting—
What a merry time he's had!

How the rafter
Rang with Laughter
In the Sylvan woods of June!
Now his Maying
Turns to praying,
And he chants a solemn tune.

Base deceiver!
He's no griever;
All his seeming sorrowing,
All his chanting
Is but canting:
Lift his cowl—behold the Spring!

SINGING IN THE RAIN

I HEARD a robin singing in the rain
At eventide when all the trees were bare,
When Springtime lagged, and Winter's icy chain
Fetter'd the eager buds and flowers fair.

I heard a robin singing in the rain
At Doubt's dim twilight when the heart was dumb,
When Faith grew faint and Hope was sick with pain,
And Sorrow sighed, "Ah, Love will never come!"

I heard a robin singing in the rain,
And in my heart there woke an old new song,
Responsive to that bird's triumphant strain,
And I went singing all the way along!

AMONG THE DANDELIONS

COME with me where the dandelions bloom,
'Tis a glorious golden zone!
Come, see how God finds rapture room,
And makes each nook His own.

This outcast weed which no hand has set,
Which the gardeners all despise,
Is the gem of the field to the children yet,
As it was to our infant eyes.

In the burning heart of this gypsy flower
Is the secret of life and death,
It laughs and loves for a springtime hour,
While its roots are bitter beneath.

And even in death it holds on high
A seed-encircled broom,
Which the winds of cold mortality
Blow to the Life to Come!

NIAGARA BY NIGHT

BENEATH the silent and unchanging spheres,
All night these cataclysmic waters roar;
One long-drawn voice comes down unnumbered years
And shall go echoing, echoing evermore.

Wild, leaping flood, shouting from age to age,
An ebbless tide, too eager for the sea;
Symbol of man's tumultuous pilgrimage
Through Time's terrain—out to Eternity.

Austere and vast, these deathless stars on high
Mock at the glow-worm glory of my soul;
This headlong torrent roars and passes by,
Scorning my drop of being amid the shoal:
Yet do I stand, in spite of stars and flood,
Flinging defiance at Infinitude!

Niagara Falls, Ont.

TORONTO AT DAWN FROM LAKE ONTARIO

GOD'S beacon flares upon the hills of dawn,
The lake a shimmering disk to eastward lies,
Westward the land, fresh as a dew-washed lawn,
Far-spreading like the plains of Paradise.

Northward the city poised serene in air!
A fixed mirage, the gaunt sky-scrappers stand
Like marble fanes, ethereally fair,
Sheer rising from the shores of wonderland.

How Dawn transfigures unheroic things!
Clothed with her light our commonplaces seem
A world-worn poet's rapt imaginings,
And life is lifted into realms of dream.

Hail! regnant city on the marge of Day,
An emigrant salutes in thee a home,
While o'er the Deep the steamer ploughs her way,
Flinging afar twin trails of smoke and foam.

OTTAWA

SINCE first I stood at gaze by Windermere
I have not seen such beauty in the earth!
All vistas I have known assemble here,
All scenic charms in one horizon's girth!
A nation's life is mirrored in this stream,
Where waters roar and wrestle, lisp and glide,
Whose source is hid far in those hills of dream,
Whose journeyings are lost in ocean's tide.

Fair Canada! Britannia's favorite child!
Nursling of Hope, cradled upon the sea,
Schooled 'mid the fitful moods of Nature wild,
Tutored in war to stern self-mastery:
May all thy future like this prospect be,
Where Beauty, Toil and Peace are reconciled.

June, 1920.

SURSUM CORDA

GIVE me life in fullest measure,
Peace and strife and pain and pleasure,
Faith and doubt and hope's far treasure.

Life's a time for spirit testing,
Earth's a planet made for questing,
Death's the only time for resting.

Forward! then, and face thy mission,
Have thy devil in derision—
On! obey the heavenly vision!

EARTH SONGS

O SONGS that sweep through the rolling earth
In rhythmic runes of storm and calm,
In sun and rain, in frost and balm,
In winds that bring us death and birth:

Thy universal melodies—
The thunder and the ocean's roar,
The lisping waves along the shore,
The zephyrs sighing through the trees—

All find an echo in the soul,
In cities and in solitudes,
In ever fluctuating moods
Man does not make nor can control.

LIGHT AND SHADE

I THANK Thee, Lord, for laughter
That lightens the load of years;
For sunshine that comes after
The dreary night of tears.

For joy that lifts the burden
From off the heart of woe;
For hope's celestial guerdon
That bids us onward go.

For summer's wide dominion,
'Mid winter's stormy scene;
For faith's cloud-cleaving pinion
Which soars to realms serene.

For childhood's happy dreaming
Amid the wreck of age;
For life immortal gleaming
O'er time's brief pilgrimage!

MY CREED

TO look at life, and see it plain,
And yet believe it is not vain;
To drink love's draught of vintage up
Then hold out for another cup;
To watch the years pass to their bourn,
Yet gladly hail the latest morn!
To know, though bud and bloom be brief,
There's life in every fallen leaf;
To greet new friends, though old depart,
And ne'er let age invade the heart;
To stand alone beneath the spheres
And hold that these few feverous years
Are but a part of one vast whole,
A little schooling for the soul;
Thus do I state in numbers terse
My theory of the universe!

THE PREACHER

LEAD us, brother, where the light is;
Cast no shadow on our way;
Know we too well where the night is—
Lead us to the open day!

Not to grope, or guess, thy mission;
Not to falter in thy speech:
Thine the supra-sensual vision,
Thine the more-than-mental reach!

We, who fare through toil and sorrow,
Come with hearts of sin and care:
We would know about the morrow—
Is there satisfaction there?

Lead us, brother, bravely daring
Thou thyself the narrow road:
Our diurnal trials sharing—
Show us how to trust thy God!

THE POTTER'S WHEEL

THIS whirling world is a Potter's wheel,
Mankind is the plastic clay;
The Potter's hand is firm as steel,
As He shapes it day by day.
But His heart is soft and His eyes are kind,
For He has a beautiful thing in mind.

Sore pressed with a perverse fate we sigh
For the end of this fight with wrong:
"There is no peace for the world," we cry,
"No hope but for the strong:"
But we're in the grip of the Potter's hand
How can the wet clay understand?

THOUGHTS OF ENGLAND

O FOR a flash of English sunlight
That comes at the end of a day of rain,
That smites the poplars with amber glory,
And clothes with heaven an English lane!

O for the thrush's song at twilight,
Those liquid notes in the hush of eve,
That fall on the heart with a sweet insistence
On strange, high things we can scarce believe.

O for the night and to wander wooing
Where the hawthorn breathes on the silent air,
To whisper of worlds for love's aspiring—
To clasp and kiss and possess them there!

SEA LOVE

THERE is nought to my soul so moving
As the sight of the infinite Sea,
So rich with the spoils of my loving,
So large and lavish and free!

So various in mood, yet unchanging—
Ah, never the same, yet for aye
Tranquil at heart, though far ranging
She loves the still haunts of the bay.

Dark perils she has, but no sea-soul
Cowers 'neath her tempests of rage,
He rides on her bosom a free soul
To sun-dawns of age after age!

Whoso' doth slight thee, fair Ocean,
Or looks on thy bosom unmoved,
Knows not the soul's deepest emotion,
Knows not what it is to have loved.

All I have loved thou hast given,
All that I lost borne away
To that far off love-garnered haven,
Whither thou'lt bear me some day.

HOMeward BOUND

AS one, who for the first time leaving home,
Looks back with glistening eyes and heart at
break,

I pause to scan the way by which I've come,
Musing awhile for home-sick Memory's sake,
Fain to return and the old ways retake.

I left thee, O my England, light of heart;
I closed my ears to old friends' last good-byes:
"Fret not," I said, "'tis not for long we part,"
And swept the mist from out my westward-gazing
eyes.

No ship can bear me o'er the seas of time
That lie between me and my native land;
Yet from proud Fancy's galleon sublime
I oft rehearse that greeting on the strand:
For I am voyaging at Time's command.
Old Time may yet the best of pilots prove,
Bearing me onward twixt the sea and sky,
Straight for my Island Home and all I love—
Blow! winds of Life and Death, a homing sailor I!

THE DREAMER

DREAMS, dreams are mine, the first and last of things;

I am the Dreamer, bold and unashamed,
Proud of the title! The brief reign of kings
It shall outlast and be for ever famed.

Dreams shall survive the wrack of ruthless wars,
Vast empires shall be shattered or decay,
The earth go drifting down a waste of stars—
Dreams shall endure when all things pass away.

When final doom o'erwhelms this boisterous world,
And blots man's record from the cosmic scene,
Above the chaos, with soft wings unfurled,
The Dove of Dreams shall brood in hope serene:
Beauty and Love eternally remain;
Dreams shall rebuild their ruined world again.

AN OLD LOVER'S SONG

I 'VE travell'd here and there, Love,
And many women seen;
And some were very fair, Love,
But you are still my Queen.

Ah, deem not that the ages
Can dim Love's morning star:
Time with our beauty wages,
But love it cannot mar.

That halcyon affection
Which drew us heart to heart
Was but a faint reflection—
We did but love in part.

And all this toil and sorrow
Which tempers love to-day
Prepares us for the Morrow,
Which shall not pass away.

This simple song I sing you,
A little sad may be,
But may its burthen bring you
The peace it gives to me.

MY MOTHER

SHE went when the flowers were springing,
When the sun at noon was high;
She fled while the thrush was singing
Of the roses bye and bye,
When the bells of hope were ringing
In the grass where the violets lie.

The flowers they could not hold her,
Her eyes to the sun were blind;
The things that the sweet birds told her
They could not change her mind;
Her heart to the world grew colder—
For the world had been unkind.

Earth gave her little but sorrow,
And mingled love's wine with tears,
And ever the hopes of the morrow
Were dim with threatening fears;
But she fled where they do not borrow
From former or after years.

Her testing time was over,
There was no cause to mourn;
She had a tryst with her lover
Who waited beyond this bourne,
Who stood 'mid the scented clover
And the golden fields of corn!

AMONG THE LEAVES: AN ELEGY

ARTHUR RONALD GREGORY

(Died October 22nd, 1911)

FALL, fall, ye leaves, there's music in your falling;
Blow, ye cold winds, 'tis meet that ye should blow;
Weep, ye gray heavens, for June is past recalling:
- Summer has gone where all the summers go.

Yet are ye come in your appointed season;
Bud, bloom and fruit in order due were thine:
Here is winter out of rhyme and reason,
Frost that has nipp'd at vernal noon the vine!

Wander, ye leaves, ye shall not ever find him;
Not of the earth was his imperial Soul!
Nor death can mar, nor dust can ever blind him;
Thine is his body, take it—'tis the toll.

Strong Soul beyond the undetermin'd border
Whither thou'rt passed and where I may not come,
What shall I say of this so swift disorder?
Spirits have speech to which our words are dumb.

Thin is that veil, for oft my spirit listening
Catches faint fragments of a Vaster Song:
Turn I from men, I know my eyes are glistening;—
Tears, with the world, do not become the strong.

Gather, ye russet myriads, where they've laid him,
Whisper your secrets to the clay beneath:
Tell of the mastery of the Hand that made him,
Something too subtle for the grasp of Death.

ANCHORED

(Written on the occasion of the sinking of the Empress of
Ireland.)

WITH homing hearts they stemmed the crisping
wave,

The fair, the good, the clever and the brave;
For home they found a wild and wandering grave,
World-vast and deep.

They shall return no more; no, nevermore;
Their ship, which hoped to rest at Britain's shore,
Lies anchor'd fast upon the ocean floor,
And there they sleep.

LAURIER

STATESMAN and seer, on whose intrepid pinion
Men were upborne to heights whence they could see
Vistas of gold athwart a wild Dominion,
Magic unfoldings of futurity.

Master of speech, he with a sane emotion
Wooded men to service, and his message drew
Fleets from afar, the highways of the ocean
Thronged with the migrant folk who caught his
view.

No superman the sword of terror wielding;
First in the lists, a gallant knight-at-arms,
Swift for the fray and deft with lance and shielding;
Fearless and fair, serene amid alarms.

Fallen he lies, dead on the eve of battle,
Prone on the field his presence graced of yore:
Silenced the tumult, hushed the party prattle—
Bear him with reverence to the mystic shore;

Launch his dark bier upon the starlit waters,
Well his soul knows the bourne it sought so long;
Turn to your tasks, Canadian sons and daughters,
Build what he dreamed, a nation free and strong.

THE BIRDS WILL MISS HIM

(TO SAMUEL T. WOOD)

THE birds will miss him when they come again;
He was the first to greet them, for he knew
Their every whim in sunshine and in rain,
And noted all the little things they do:
He loved their verdurous haunts by wood and stream;
'Twas his delight to take them unaware,
Or muse upon them, and with mind adream
Worship the God who thought of things so fair.

The birds will miss him—nay, for with the spring
He shall awaken and go out once more.
His was no death that calls for sorrowing;
His spirit shall go wandering as of yore
Beside the streams or in the songful woods,
The genius of his native solitudes.

THE MASQUE OF TIME

THERE is a knowledge hidden to the wise,
Which never can be grasped by mental kings;
There is a vision of these mundane things,
Which only is beheld through poet's eyes :
This solid earth, these cloud and star-strewn skies,
This life with all its joys and travailings,
This clay to which the spirit fondly clings—
'Tis all a little masque in Paradise.

The phantom forms of beauty come and go,
In bud and flower and fruit and mystic seed ;
Frail infants into maids and young men grow,
And Love enfolds them to transmit the breed :
O what a wonder-haunted world is this !
A little masque amid the vales of bliss.

L'ENVOI

ALL that life gave have I given,
Nor thought over-much of the prize;
For the loftiest peaks have I striven,
Till my quest has been lost in the skies.

I have hitched my hopes to Orion,
And trusted the gods were true—
If I down, then down comes Zion!
If I fall, the stars fall too!

WAR-TIME POEMS

THE NEW OLYMPIANS

(Dedicated to Commander Scott and the crew of the R
34, the first airship to cross the Atlantic)

WHO shall chant for them a worthy paean,
They who out-soared Olympus, made a path
Above the clouds, charted the Empyrean,
Defied the lightning and the thunder's wrath,
And spanned the heaving chasm of the sea—
Where is the Homer for this Odyssey?
Awake! ye Muses, for the Age of Gold
Has come again, and gods with men conspire;
Deft Science has fulfilled those fables old:
Prometheus, who once stole celestial fire,
Has brought to men the peerless gift of wings,
They scale the skies beyond the flight of bird,
The lark no longer at the gate of heaven sings,
For man mounts upward singing till his song is all
unheard!

Where Scotia's beetling crags assail the sky,
Like bastions of her inviolate soul,
Our ship lies moored, preening her wings to fly,
And we are dreaming of the distant goal
In that new land of strenuous liberty:
But man's a midge to this prodigious world,
And yonder yawns the ocean gulf between,
Down which our skyey galleon may be hurled
By some air-god jealous of his demesne.

Leaping the hills on whirling wings of wind,
Into the sunset like a star we sail;
Green Erin lies, a tearful mist, behind—
The Atlantic and the gleaming West we hail!

Broad billowy cloudscapes to our eyes unfold,
O'er-arched with rain-bows, fringed with fiery gold,
Plunging through vapors of primatic hues,
Skirting the saffron isles of sunset views,
By emerald meres and many a sinuous stream—
Realm of reality, yet tenuous and transient as a dream!

How oft in childhood have we gazed and gazed
In wonder at heaven's gorgeous pageantry,
Peopling the clouds with Fancy's progeny—
How speed we now amid these clouds amazed!

Here Satan, in the morning of the world,
Paused in his passage to man's Eden fair,
And, looking down, beheld the blissful pair
Mid nature's primal glory, fresh unfurled!
Ah, did he dream that even where he stood
Man too would stand, and he would fall to rise;
That Cain would welter in his brother's blood,
While Abel sailed in triumph through the skies!

A shimmering disk beneath us lies the ocean,
The burnished sun upon its western rim;
We seem the only thing of life and motion,
And yet we fail to keep the pace with him
Who leaves our straining, panting craft behind
Among the stars, the stars so true and kind!
All night we hold sweet converse with the spheres,
Such close communion as the Shepherds knew
On Palestinian hills, beyond the years;
The Angel Host to every man appears,
Who looks and listens with a reverent heart and
true.

*Asleep in a hammock up in the sky
Rocked with the rhythm of spheres as we fly;
Poised like a planet in fathomless space,
Free from the trammels of time and place;
Around us sun-systems eternally roll—
Sleep and the Stars are the friends of the soul.*

Awake! the rosy heralds of the Dawn
Pursue us and the Stars turn pale and flee!
The misty curtains of the Day are drawn
And, lo! the Earth again is ours, the Sea
Dotted with frigid isles of fantasy,
With here and there a ship, which shouts "Ahoy!"
In the dynamic language of the air;
We hail the Western World with hearts of joy—
Columbia! the bountiful, the fair!

Illimitable lands! Arcadian vales
And level prairies clothed with golden grain,
Cities which seem but fictions of the brain,
Horizons, where the sated vision fails,
Unfold beneath us as we glide along—
A day-struck comet fore-ordained in song,
The herald of those argosies foretold,
Circling the planet in an Age of Gold!

BRITAIN

WHAT is this Britain that survives
The deaths of a million valiant men—
How can she spare so many lives,
Yet rise through it all and fight again?

This is the Britain that has stood
Against the wrack of a thousand wars,
Who rules the seas with her sailor-brood,
And nets all sunsets with her spars!

Her sons ransack the earth for ore,
They smite the forests to fields of corn,
They perish in quest of an unknown shore—
Yet yearn for the land where they were born.

Under the ensign of the Cross,
Her staunch Crusaders never fail;
Undaunted by defeat and loss
They fight for the dreams that must prevail.

Since Alfred launched his Saxon fleet
And flung defiance at the Dane,
Since Drake sailed out the foe to greet
And shattered all the pride of Spain,

Britain has weathered every blast,
In liberty and right secure;
Broad based upon her deathless past,
In God and her Right she shall endure!

CONFEDERATION ODE

SONS of Britain, Sons of France,
Arise!

Sweep from your eyes
These pestilential mists of prejudice and pride!
'Twas not some wild mischance
That set you side by side
In this Dominion, rich from sea to sea
With hoarded treasures of the vast
Cycles of the past
Challenging your emprise and husbandry.

Stir not the rancorous fires
Of that forgotten feud,
In which your rugged sires
Long barter'd blood for blood:
When France and Albion were foes,
Montcalm fell fighting for his country's smile,
Wolfe's dying dreams were of his Mother Isle;
And now, when France and Albion in the throes
Of battle are allied against the Hun,
Canadians—Gaul and Briton—still loyal to their home-
lands may be One.

Diverse in speech and creed—
Fling these factions far!
One faith is yours, one valor-testing need—
See where your kinsmen, bloody-browed with war,
Gaze westward for the dawning of your ships—
Arise!
No thought of doubt must loose their Spartan lips,
Go forth—or stay and boast no more your breed.

Dream not the rocky bastion of Quebec
Shall hold the Hun at bay
If that heroic line gives way,
Which through these shattered years
Of flashing hopes and frightful fears
Has held the tyrant hosts in check :
Mount Royal would look down on devastation far and
wide,
The virgin Lawrence tide
Would blush with fierce ensanguined shame,
Ontario's idyllic dales would quake with dread alarms,
The snow-crowned Rockies would re-echo with the
crash of arms,
Your Prairie heritage
And all the glory of your pioneers
Would pass—the peerless name
Of Canada be blotted from proud Honor's page.

What have we done?
Yea, Ypres and Courcellette and Vimy Ridge were
won
By those who at the first far call
Fled the glad haunts of peace and Home,
Renounced their earthly all,
And never shall return across the severing foam.
They lie enfolded in the precious dust they bought,
For them all wars are o'er ;
Peace is their portion, 'twas for Peace they fought ;
They sleep,
The call of bugle or thundering of guns shall wake
them now no more.
We, too, shall sleep,
But in that shadowy land
Where dreams are real and immortal things,

Of us they shall demand—

“Did you keep

The faith in France when we went fighting down?”

We shall make answer to these questionings:

“We finished that good fight, and share with you the
righteous crown.”

Toronto, July 1st, 1917.

THEY SHALL RETURN

THEY shall return when the wars are over,
When battles are memories dim and far;
Where guns now stand shall be corn and clover,
Flowers shall bloom where the blood-drops are.

They shall return with laughing faces,
Limbs that are lithe and hearts new-born;
Yea, we shall see them in old home-places,
Lovelier yet in the light of morn.

Dream not they die, though their bodies perish;
Spirits like theirs, so free and brave,
Go on to conquer and vitally flourish
Spite of the sword and the grasping grave.

They shall return when the wars are over,
When battles are memories dim and far;
Where guns now stand shall be corn and clover,
Flowers shall bloom where the blood-drops are—
They shall return!

WATCHING THE FISHERS

I STAND in wonder by this inland sea,
Watching the fishers plying to and fro;
As He stood on the shores of Galilee,
In Palestine the blessed, long ago.

I will go down along the white sea-wall,
Mayhap young Peter's at his nets again,
Musing and waiting for the Master's call:
"Come, follow me, I'll make you fish for men."

Ah, shall he wait and mend his nets alway,
And shall his night-toil in the deep be vain?
Shall the wild tempest rage with none to say
"Peace!" O Lord Christ, wilt Thou not come again?

The little home at Bethany is drear,
Stricken with grief for one whose grave is sealed;
The widow weeps beside a hopeless bier,
The blind, the dumb, the lame ones go unhealed.

The world of men is heavy-laden, Lord;
Weary with labour and relentless strife:
Come with Thy magic touch, Thy mighty word—
Bring us Thy Peace and Thy abundant Life!

Port Dover, Ontario.

THE SUPER-MAN*

WHAT is this thing they call the Super-man?
Come, Friend, and let us walk beneath the stars;
Lift up your eyes, these circling wonders scan—
See, yonder burns the fiery planet Mars!

Across the Zenith runs the Milky Way,
Beneath the pole-star swings the faithful Seven;
Look well, my Friend, consider it and say
Who is this Super-worm that mocks at Heaven?

One Nietzsche was a fly of German birth,
'Twas he who in his mighty moment said:
"I am the highest product of the earth,
The Super-man has come, the Gods are dead!"

Poor gods! I saw you as the lightning fall
From heaven to the abyss of worn-out things!
I saw men mount Olympus, giants tall
In mental stature, scientific kings!

They flung their fiery thunder-bolts afar,
They launched their swift Armadas on the skies,
They shook the world with Armageddon war,
The Poor were slaughter'd like a swarm of flies!

Throughout the world the murderous message sped:
"The Fittest only shall on earth survive!"
The meek before their cruel engines fled,
Till none but Super-men remained alive.

There was an ominous lull for many days;
The sun and stars, indifferent as of yore,
Looked down upon the scene with tranquil gaze,
Though every land was stained with human gore.

*This poem was published in *The Literary Monthly* in 1910.

Then suddenly there flashed the globe around
The herald of a final test of power :
And soon upon the air the thunders sound,
While to the earth there fell a crimson shower !

.
In the nocturnal shadow of our sphere
There walked a man alone beside the Sea ;
Wild were his eyes, as with a nameless fear :
“Alone!” he cried, “there’s none now left but me !

“I am the relict of a giant race ;
The Fittest, the imperial Super-man !”
He wiped the sweat and gore from off his face,
And through his matted hair his fingers ran.

He raised his eyes unto the starry deep,
He looked across the dark and silent wave ;
All was encompassed in a lethal sleep,
And the whole planet was a living grave !

EARTHQUAKE AND WAR

DEEP calls to deep in these terrestrial shocks,
Earth's primal passions make their fury known;
Upheaving 'stablished cities, rending rocks—
Shattering the base of Man's imperial throne.
Under the World fierce elemental fires
Burn with Tartarean heat from age to age,
Deep, secret and insatiable desires
Which burst their central bounds in hellish rage.
All human peace is transient—sweeter so;
Elysium still eludes the dreamer's grasp:
Hope lures us on, and ever as we go,
The thing we dreamed is not the shape we clasp.
Deep calls to deep and heights of Hope reply:
Dream, baffled soul, serene the stars on high!

THE BELLS OF FLANDERS

DO you hear the bells soft chiming
From the blessed Yules of yore?
Sweeter far than poet's rhyming
Is their message, but their chiming
Is re-echoed now no more!

For the belfries all are shattered,
And the bells lie dumb in rust;
All the souls that loved them scattered,
And their homes and hearths are battered
Into unresponsive dust.

Still the broken bells of Flanders
Chime their hope down misty years;
When the dust claims these Commanders—
"Christ is born!" shall ring through Flanders
When the Prince of Peace appears.

Do you hear the bells soft chiming
From the blessed Yules of yore?
Sweeter far than poet's rhyming
Is their message, and their chiming
Shall re-echo evermore!

THE PIPERS

HARK to the skirling pipes that sing
Their wild war song to the marching men!
Along the kilted ranks they ring,
And Scotland's heroes rise again;
Wallace and Bruce
Break death's long truce,
The clans forgather from hill and glen!
No Scot can quail when the pipes begin,
They charm the dread of the roaring gun;
They'll charge through the pit to the piper's din,
And it's death to the foe who does not run.
The piper's song
Makes Scotsmen strong,
And there's none can beat them 'neath the sun.
Play on, ye pipes, till the world be free,
To the sons of Scotland, stout and brave,
Chant out your song of liberty,
And bid them stem the tyrant wave:
Till from shore to shore
The wide world o'er
War songs shall cease with the last dead slave.

THE VISION OF ARMAGEDDON

HIGH o'er the din of these war-shocked days
I rose in a wild ecstatic flight,
And down, with an all-embracing gaze,
I looked, and lo! to my frenzied sight
The earth lay stretched like a boundless plain,
Where the nations clashed in a deadly strife,
Till the verdant lands and the azure main
Turned red with the wine of human life.

'Twas the Armageddon of Right and Wrong,
Where Death flies swift as the lightning's gleam;
Where the weak go down before the strong,
Where the things men hold and the things they
dream
Are flung in the fires of infernal fray,
And purged of their dross in flames of rage,
For the purer life of an after day,
And making of men for the Golden Age.

TO OUR FALLEN

WHAT shall we say of the men who died,
Who sleep to-night where the poppies bloom?
This feast is not to them denied,
Their spirits are here in this banquet room.

They who made light of the gloomy grave,
Who fearless plunged into Freedom's fight—
Death cannot hold the happy brave,
The freedom they fought for is theirs to-night!

They come not as ghosts to trouble joy,
They laugh and sing as they did of old;
A soldier's heart is the heart of a boy,
And boys are the men of the Realms of Gold.

Silent we stand 'mid the scenes they loved,
While memory bridges the widening years:
Here, where with us they lived and moved,
We pay them a tribute too high for tears.

THE OLD YEAR AND THE NEW

(Midnight, Dec. 31, 1917)

SEE, where he goes!
The mad Old Year,
Friend of our foes;
Fire and famine are in his rear,
Cities desolate and drear,
Immeasurable woes!
Look how his skirts are smeared with gore,
He is kin with the three red years before—
Enough, O Time, let us see no more!

Fly on! sweet Earth, and bring
The healing leaves of Spring,
The songs of birds that build the world anew,
The morning's dreamful hours,
The magic of the flowers,
The roses and the lilies drenched with dew!

Hark!
Through the dark
The New Year comes
With roll of drums,
Bugles blaring,
Banners flaring,
Marching hosts to battle faring;
Listen!
(How the stars glisten!)
They are singing songs of home,
Songs of Love that lives for aye;
'Neath the midnight's spangled dome,
Faring over field and foam,
Warrior's singing songs of home,
Peace and Home so far away.

Hail to the strong New Year!
Our hearts are armed 'gainst every fear,
War's alarms no more can shocks us,
False hopes can no longer mock us,
For there are no bitterer throes
In thy calendar of woes
Than this harried world has known
Through the frightful year that's flown.

And yet, in spite of all,
We flout the tyrant's thrall,
We send this message down the years to be :
"For Righteousness we wrought,
And with our best we bought
The Charter of your Peace and Liberty."

Fly on! sweet Earth, and bring
The healing leaves of Spring,
The songs of peace that build the world anew,
The love of man and maid,
The zest of toil and trade,
The Brotherhood of Nations strong and true!

NOCTURNE

WHITE hangs the mist along the black ravine,
The breathing blossoms languish on the night,
Soft music steals from ivied casements bright
Kindling the stars beyond the leafy screen:
With virgin grief she contemplates the scene,
Where late she tasted love's supreme delight
With him who now lies fallen in the fight,
Far off in Flanders—ocean wastes between.

They shall not walk again these fragrant ways,
In spring or summer or mid autumn leaves,
Low listening to his whisper'd words of praise,
His kisses now are memory's make-believes:
A singer's voice floats from the latticed eaves,
The passionate stars above the elm tree blaze.

Rosedale, Toronto, 1917.

DIVINE ASTROLOGY

(The planets Jupiter and Venus were twin evening stars
early in the war.)

OLYMPUS holds high carnival to-night,
Adown the west fair Venus and proud Jove
Meet as for nuptials in the purple light,
The marriage of Omnipotence and Love!

Fierce burns the warrior Mars above the east,
Ominously ascendant; Luna serene
Rides at the zenith, Saturn like a priest
Consults with her on time and man's demesne.

There is a true, divine astrology,
And whoso' cares can read his final fate
Writ in the heavens in flaming charactry,
All these bright orbs on our obedience wait;
When Might weds Love, War can no longer rage;
Luna brings peace, Saturn the Golden Age!

BEFORE GAZA

(To Captain E. Stanley Russell, B.A., M.C., who was
killed in action before Gaza, Palestine, November
6th, 1917. He won the Hemans' Prize
Medal for Lyrical Poetry (University
of Liverpool).)

BEFORE the gates of Gaza—there he fell,
A bullet stopped the business of his brain,
War's clanging pageant vanished like a spell,
And all was silent slumberland again:
They bore his body with a martial strain
And laid it in the bloomless desert sands,
His manly beauty hid in dust for aye;
There, where the brooding, timeless Arab stands,
He sleeps with all the glory of an ancient day.

How sweet was life, how wondrous to his eyes
This earth with all its mystic scheme of things!
Each dawn brought to his soul some new surprise,
Each sunset kindled strange imaginings,
The broad night gave him space to spread his wings;
Free from the trammels of enslaving Time,
Life was a high adventure of the Soul;
Eternity was his prenatal clime,
One world was not enough to serve him for a goal.

O Youth! brief decade of divine desires,
Of hill-top hopes and dungeon-dark despairs,
Languors inane and fiercest passion-fires,
Sceptic denials, Heaven-assailing prayers!
How have I passed thy boundary unawares,
Passed to this level plain of servitude,
This inland life of dull conformities,
Where nothing stirs the ardour of the blood,
Where Faith and Hope and Love are marble memories.

Some souls there be who visit Time's domain
But for a little season, they are sent
To do some special task of joy or pain;
They stand within the doorway of our tent
And take our hearts with sweet astonishment—
How rapturous was that greeting on the morn
When first I caught the vision of his face!
He came when I was in a pass forlorn,
He made this world for me a happy trysting-place.

Oft in my dreams, the dreams that cross the day,
His face before me rises, and his eyes
Look into mine in that heart-greeting way
Which ever took my spirit by surprise,
Like as a shaft of gold through leaden skies:
Such sweet omnipotence was in his smile,
It has a magic power in memory
To build that world I've lost a little while,
Build it in lasting dreams—there in the vast To Be!

An arrow-thrust, deep piercing to the heart,
Was that winged-word that told me he was slain;
The seas had held us through the years apart,
But Hope had told us we should meet again,
To calculate the profit of our pain,
To moralize upon the ways of men,
And test the fabric of those early dreams—
Such converse I shall never know again
Till that glad fellowship beside Elysian streams.

No epitaph I write to this my friend,
To be engraved upon a sculptored stone;
No requiem for his soul would I attend,
Nor elegy compose in rueful tone;
His place of burial is to me unknown,
For he was slain amid the clash of war,
Passing in glory of heroic fire,
The chariots and the horsemen bore him far
Beyond this cloud-wrapped sphere to stars of his desire.

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